

Food For Thought
From Your Employee Assistance Program

New Year's What???

A 10 Minute Guide To Getting Your New Year's Resolutions Back On Track!

Remember your New Years Resolutions??? Depending on how you count time, they may have been just one Federal Holiday, house payment or Super Bowl party ago. But if you are one of the almost 90 million Americans who made and already abandoned one or more of their New Year's Resolutions take heart! You are not alone! Not only is the failure to keep Resolutions almost as common as making them, but there are some simple steps you can take to get back on track and avoid getting off the track in the future.

What ARE New Years Resolutions?

New Year's Resolutions are commitments we make to complete a project, change a bad habit or make a lifestyle alteration that are generally seen as beneficial. The name comes from the fact that these commitments usually are initiated on New Year's Day. Written records documenting New Year's resolutions go back at least 6000 years to the Babylonians. For them the New Year was a time of renewal and optimism about the seasons to come. Resolutions were made with the hope of having a bountiful year. Their most common New Year's Resolution was to return borrowed farming tools before the year's planting began.

New Year's Resolutions have changed a great deal in 6000 years, but they still are based in the core themes of hope and optimism for a beneficial New Year. According to AC Neilson (the same guys that monitor what we watch on TV) for 2007 fifty-six percent of the U.S. population (almost 170 million people) planned on making (and hopefully keeping) at least one New Year's Resolution. Many New Year's Resolutions in the United States often involve maintaining peak vitality, physical fitness, or appearance. They may also reflect charity or social responsibility such as donating to worthy causes more often or being more economically or environmentally responsible.

On top of the Neilson list for 2007 Resolutions were:

- Spending more time with family (50%+)
- Working fewer hours (50%)
- Exercising more (34%)
- Going on a diet (33%).
- Cut down or quit smoking (20% of smokers) and
- Avoiding bad relationships and Toxic people

Why do SOME people fail at keeping resolutions?

At the six month point (July 1st) after making New Year Resolutions, more than 50% of people have totally given up on one or more of them. What's behind this? Here's some ideas from experts who have studied the issue:

- Timing: January is a tough time to start anything new. Holiday eating from Halloween through SuperBowl Sunday packs on the pounds. It's cold and dark in most of the U.S. and we are less active and less motivated for change. Money is tighter. Stress is higher. Hardly an ideal time to undertake major lifestyle changes.
- High Motivation/No Real Plan: Unlike your VCR, New Year's Resolutions do not come with a set of instructions. While making Resolutions is to be applauded, it is only the "first step" in making a change. Even with the best intentions, without a detailed plan and expert advice the probability of success is lower.
- Unrealistic Goals: It is a rare person who could actually lose 35 pounds in 4 months, go cold turkey from smoking, tell their boss outright that they won't be at work as much; or worse yet, accomplish all of these simultaneously?
- Being Too Tough on Ourselves: Big expectations can yield even bigger disappointments. Being intolerant of slow progress or occasional setbacks can undo motivation and cause us to give up on Resolutions without ever realizing that we were the culprit.
- Lack of Support/Scrutiny: It's hard to sustain motivation in a vacuum. As social beings, humans do better with goal attainment when they have support and scrutiny from others. If you're on a diet and no one else knows a Big Mac is not part of your approved menu, self-control is all you've got between you and that Special 600 calorie Sauce.

getTING back on track USING THE 3 Rs!

If you do find yourself "off track" with your Resolutions, here's a simple 3 step process you can use to regain your momentum.

1. Review Your Plan
2. Revise It Using the 6 Steps Below, and
3. Restart Your Efforts at a Better Time

STEP 1: Aim a Bit Lower. Most New Year's resolutions are easier announced (or written) than done—but if you set the bar too high, you're doomed from the start. Instead of a sweeping declaration like "I will lose 30 pounds by April, target a goal that's more attainable, like losing 10 or 15 pounds, or better yet changing what you eat and scheduling exercise like walking; ignoring weight loss goal totally.

STEP 2: Don't Overload Yourself. It's difficult enough for the average person to follow through on one ambitious New Year's resolution; why saddle yourself with three or four? Choose the most pressing issue at hand—losing weight, finding a girlfriend, improving your relationship with your parents—and concentrate on that. Trying to do everything simultaneously practically guarantees failure across the board.

STEP 3: Beef Up Your Game Plan with Proven Techniques. Become an expert on attaining your specific Resolution goal(s). Use the Internet. Read everything you can find. Seek out “experts” (personal and profession) who can advise you on what it will take because they have done it themselves. Be flexible and willing to change techniques, tolerate setbacks and lengthen your time-line as necessary.

STEP 4: Wait Until Spring to Restart. Sometimes the best way to accomplish a New Year's resolution is to make it at a time of year of your choosing, rather than the one dictated by the calendar. April 1 is a good alternate date, since the change of season will neatly coincide with the change you're hoping to accomplish in yourself.

STEP 5: Tell Everyone You Know About Your Resolution(s). The more people you announce it to, the more people there'll be to prod you along if your motivation flags. There's no shame in using a bit of peer pressure to help accomplish your resolutions.

STEP 6: Reward Yourself and Watch Your Attitude. Following through on a New Year's resolution is rarely easy, so a little mental conditioning goes a long way. If you've resolved to shop less, stroke yourself for not buying those shoes by indulging in a low or no cost reward. If you've resolved to be nicer to people, use some “positive self-talk” to support your efforts after enduring a tedious cocktail party with some toxic people.

IF YOU STILL CAN'T DO IT ALONE, CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE!

The DEA Employee Assistance Program is always available for consultation and supportive counseling about New Year's Resolutions or any other topic that may be important to you. Its services are 100% confidential and always available to DEA Employees and family members free of charge. For more information or to make an appointment, contact the EAP HelpLine at 1-800-275-7460 or visit us in WebSter on Firebird by using the following link <http://webster/cgi-bin/fr/manuals/eap/index.html>

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